

Birds of a Feather- OLLIs Over 1000 Members

A. Brainstorm- What are the challenges in managing an OLLI program with over 1000 members?

The group brainstormed and developed the following list:

- Maintaining momentum
- Maintaining age diversity
- Maintaining a sense of community
- Facilities/Space
- Competition for enrollment
- Managing enrollment
- Relationship w/University
- Work Load
- Availability of faculty
- Systems Management
Registration/volume
- Structure/Strategies
- Perceptions and challenges of moving to the 2nd million endowment
- Communications

B. Solutions/suggestions in dealing with these challenges

The group went through issues individually to discuss ideas for dealing with the challenges. Because of time constraints, the group could not discuss all issues.

B1. Facilities/Space Issues

1. Growth usually requires additional space. The University of Cincinnati tries to balance use evenly between old and new space to encourage acceptance and integration into the program. You may need to change the culture of keeping everything together.
2. Duke arranged use of space at Jewish congregations, which usually have classrooms. They allow congregation members to attend classes as a trade-off for use their facilities.
3. Cincinnati uses volunteers at remote sites to help them manage set-up, AV support, etc.
4. Dayton has restructured the schedule to accommodate growth, e.g., offer Saturday classes.
5. University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) has leased space, and arranged free joint use of public space in a county park.
6. Cincinnati counsels flexibility-- emphasize quality growth.
7. Dayton recommends developing partnerships on campus, e.g. shared facilities.
8. OLLI at University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) pursuing joint space planning with University for new space.
9. Sonoma State exploring use of movie theaters for classes. Many are not in use during the day.

B2. Managing Workload

1. Minnesota recommends keeping volunteers involved to help manage the additional workload.
2. Denver seeks university recognition for more staff.
3. Kennesaw State attempts to get university stakeholders behind the program (Continuing Education, Dean, President); nurturing.
4. University in-kind support is key (Rutgers/Sonoma State UNC/Wilmington Univ. Florida)
5. To do list –what can you delegate – need to carefully prioritize. What do we have to do ourselves? University of South Florida
6. USC Beaufort- Need to recognize that we can no longer do some of the things we did when smaller.
7. Minnesota commissioned a management study – how to best use our resources/map.

B3. Managing the Competition for Enrollments

1. University of Southern Maine recommends going to a lottery system to improve fairness.
2. Cincinnati has on-line registration. Enrollment on a first come/first served basis, with a wait-list.
3. Minnesota mails out its catalog first class to speed delivery.
4. Denver delays the start of enrollment for 10 days after the first batch of catalogs are mailed.
5. UNCW uses on-line registration using a commercially available software package called Aceware, with a firewall for security.
6. UNCW also inserts its catalog in local newspaper.
7. USM strongly recommends that OLLI control its registration and membership system. Do not farm it out to the university (USM)

B4. How do you Maintain Momentum?

1. Denver always tries to have a new WOW each term to keep the program fresh. Each session/benefit added.
2. Need to do strategic planning to prioritize and position for the future (UNC/Wilmington)
3. Cincinnati recommends mentoring and sharing ideas with other OLLIs
4. Keep getting the word out in community (Cincinnati)
5. Keep people happy; give them what they want (Cincinnati)
6. LSU has coffees and something extra/speaker— encourage members to bring a friend.
7. USC Beaufort offered summer classes that were open to members and non-members. Turned out to be a very successful membership drive.
8. USCB also offers OLLI sampler programs before each term. For the cost of a membership fee, new member gets 3 free lectures. In addition, this positions them to register for classes in the upcoming term (after paying the term fee).
9. UNCW conducts a Preview Party/ice cream socials

B5 Structures/Strategies- Discussion of this topic was more general in nature. University of South Florida wanted to get some idea about how other OLLIs were organized.

1. UNCW prefers a model with more control and direction by OLLI Directors.
2. Minnesota uses a number of committees that have to have to track and report on progress to their Board.
3. Sonoma State has recently changed the membership mix on its Board of Directors to add professors and students.
4. New York University liked the distinction made in another working session. It categorized the philosophical divide between OLLI structures between programs that:
 - members as consumers (staff driven)
 - members as contributors (member driven)

B6. Age Diversity (how do you attract a younger demographic to the program?)

1. Be strategic about course offerings/when offered to pull in some younger folks (Cincinnati and Denver)
2. USCB does not have any age requirements.
3. Kennesaw uses the feedback/evaluation process to develop programs to appeal to different age groups.